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Pop queen kicks off tour

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Review

WORCESTER – Pop queen Hilary Duff kicked off the U.S. leg of her "Most Wanted Tour" Tuesday night with a 75-minute set of bubblegum pop before a sold out crowd of adoring pre-teen and teen-age fans at the Worcester Centrum Centre.

Duff's already incalculable and rising popularity is due to the fact that she's become an entertainment triple threat. She rose to fame on the immensely popular Disney television program "Lizzy McGuire," before taking on the big screen with "Agent Cody Banks" and "The Lizzy McGuire Movie" in which she played an average teen turned mega pop star. And with life now imitating art, she's taken on singing and is selling her brand of kid-friendly pop like hotcakes.

Duff opened her only New England engagement with "Girl Can Rock" from the soundtrack to her latest cinematic effort "A Cinderella Story." But as Duff said, this wasn't just any concert. The entire audience was part of an MTV video shoot for Duff's upcoming single "Fly" which will appear on her new album to be released in September. Duff sang "Fly" twice, presumably for film coverage, but her young fans didn't seem to mind the repetition one bit.

The young star also performed another new song from her forthcoming album called "Weird" as well as tracks from her smash hit debut "Metamorphosis" including the single "Anywhere but Here," and the post breakup rocker "So Yesterday," as well as the album's optimistic title track.

Equal parts Avril Lavigne and Britney Spears, yet not as moody as the former and not as sexed up as the latter, Duff is really the kind of pop star that every parent wants their child to listen to. Much like her former character Lizzy McGuire, Duff maintains a strong sense of individuality while also being ruled by her emotions and subject to her faults (you know, like an actual person). "Haters," another new track that will appear on her forthcoming release is a perfect example of Duff's approach to music. It's a simple punk influence pop song that just happens to be defiantly anti-negativity – a perfect anthem for today's world of hyper-judgmental grade school cliques.

Admittedly, Duff isn't the greatest singer in the world, but it is also very hard not to like her. Full of thanks for the crowd's support, she continued to score with the sweet teen crush ballad "Where Did I Go Right," the punchier "Why Not," and the energized "Party Up."

The new queen of teen closed her set with another new track appropriately titled "Rock This World" before returning to the stage with her sister Haylie Duff for a crowd pleasing performance of their hit duet "Our Lips Are Sealed" as heard on the soundtrack to "A Cinderella Story."

Indeed, it was a family affair, as older sister Haylie opened with her own 20-minute set of similarly palatable pop. Though not yet as popular as her sister, Haylie enjoyed the same screaming approval from the young crowd as she performed tracks like "The Girl in the Band," Confidential," and "It's Different."

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